

An Address
TO THE PEOPLE,

ON THE PRESENT RELATIVE SITUATIONS OF

England and France;

WITH

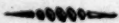
REFLECTIONS

ON

THE GENIUS OF DEMOCRACY,

AND ON

Parliamentary Reform.



BY

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London,

Printed for F. & C. RIVINGTONS, St. Paul's Church Yard,
and J. WHITE, Fleet Street.

1799. 202

TO THE PEOPLE

OF THE

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

REPUBLIC



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AN ADDRESS,

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MEN AND BRETHREN,

THE present æra, in which we are living, is a crisis big with the fate of empires. Providence, the intricacy of whose operations we cannot unravel, and the wisdom of which it would be impious to arraign, is busy in sifting the nations, and apportioning them their several shares of happiness or of misery.

The quantity of temporal calamity or prosperity, which individuals experience, does not seem always adapted to their relative degrees of vice or of virtue; but, when we take a larger survey of man, we behold national glory keeping pace with national virtue, while the depression

of states is seen lowering according to their wickedness.

For a long while, France appeared the mistress of fortune; the triumph of her arms was as rapid as it was extensive; but her prosperity, originating rather from the pusillanimity or the dissensions of her adversaries, more than her own innate virtue, did not rest on a solid foundation.—It was not that prosperity which has an adamantine base; or which is bestowed by the favour of the Supreme Disposer, or the exertions of bravery in a cause that is just.—It was the transient triumph of atrocious criminality; it was the full-blown bubble of impiety and presumption, which dazzled the eye for awhile, but which has, at last, burst—to the joy and astonishment of the nations.

On the other hand, the political horizon of Britain was, for a season, and, no doubt, for wise purposes, overcast; and, at one period, it seemed a matter of uncertainty, whether even the interior of our island would not have been

subject to the ravages and desolations of France. But Providence did not long suffer the depression of gloomy despondency, to lower upon the brow of the most virtuous and humane people in Europe. He, who either swells or moderates the fury of the tempest, and who either calms or agitates the moral atmosphere of man, he, who sways the hearts of nations, as well as the tides of the ocean, inspired this nation with the unanimity of heroism, to resist the proud menace, that was wafted, by the lips of pestilential malignity, from the opposite shore.

This nation, moved with energy divine, and feeling the glow of patriotism, rose up, as one man, in the determined spirit of resistance, to the aggressions of ambition. The posture of defence, in which this country in a moment placed herself, struck dismay into the haughty legions, which stood on the coast of France, thirsting for the blood of Englishmen and the plunder of England. Even the veterans of Italy, if they did not crouch, at the feet, were alarmed at the

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shaking of the mane of the British lion. The boastingly-clamoured army, that was destined against England, was frittered away in puny detachments, that were intended to abet the system of outrage that was begun in Ireland; but of these troops, the part, which was landed in that country, was obliged to surrender at discretion; and the other part was either captured by the vigilance of our fleets, or compelled to shrink, pusillanimously, to their own shores—happy to have escaped the terrors of English bravery, though at the price of confusion and disgrace.

The splendid and costly armament, which the enemy fitted out against Egypt, and which, it was vainly presumed, would spread the havoc of French ambition from the Nile to the Ganges, disembarked its numerous army, only to be cut off from all communication with their friends and their homes, to experience the vicissitudes of war, of sickness, and of famine, and to waste away in an inglorious bondage, as much thinned by the unwholesomeness of the climate, as the devastation of the sword.

The fleet which landed the great hero of France, on the surface of that country, where Providence has so often signalised his arm, in the overthrow of ambition, and in the punishment of wickedness; and where the laurels of the illustrious genius of Buonaparte are doomed to wither away in ignominy:—that fleet, as if seized with a spirit of refistless infatuation, on purpose to mark the Divine displeasure on the *the resistance* expedition it had protected, and on the impious audacity of those by whom it had been planned—*was spirited*—that fleet, protected by its own superiority and by batteries from the land, became, in a moment, a prey to the bravery of the English—a bravery, assisted by that unseen, but all-moving all-inspiring energy, that gives not always the battle to the strong, but adds, as it did in this instance, to the humiliation of the proud, by causing their subjugation by an inferior force.

The advantages of situation, which the enemy occupied, and in which they vainly trusted, were made to turn to their confusion; the al-

most impregnable posture of defence, in which they lay, could not save them from the blow, which the well-tempered and well-directed valour of British Seamen struck and which the Divine Arbiter of battles made effectual.

This victory, the most glorious in the annals of naval history, has laid the posterity of France in the dust. It has chastised her insolence, it has punished her injustice, it has stopped the sanguinary and destructive career of her ambition. It has taken off the panic-struck imbecility of fear, into which the courage of the nations had dwindled under the terror of her past triumphs and their past defeats.

It has roused mankind to a proper sense of their true political interests, which consist in concentrating the whole aggregate of their divided strength, notwithstanding all former jealousies and schisms to oppose the vast and gigantic plans of French injustice. — These are the fruits; this is likely to be the result of this unparalleled triumph of British valour on the waters of the distant

ocean. Thus it may save the world from the rapacious gripe of that domineering tyranny which has risen on the ruins of the antient despotism of France.

Arbitrary and oppressive as was that despotism, great as were its exactions on the people, heavy and galling as were the chains, with which, it encumbered the free-born genius of man,—still it has been succeeded by a power ten-times as despotic, as oppressive as unjust,—a power whose extortions are not restrained by any veneration for custom, for opinion, for humanity; but which keep pace with the prodigality of its ambition;—a power whose devastations rend asunder all the charities that soften the otherwise harsh features of social inequality;—a power which assiduously labours to trample out every antient vestige of christian sympathy;—a power which spills the blood of its subjects, as if the blood of man might be spilt like water, and which is as lavish of their property, as if the only design of its institution were robbery and rapine.

If you say that this tyranny is not so factious and intriguing as the *old depotism*, you will find that there is in the breasts of *the five men* an unquenchable fire of discord and of turbulence; compared to which, the unquiet spirit of *the old court* was meekness and moderation.

The intrigues of the Directory agitate the world; they sow strife and foment divisions in every corner of the globe. They seem agitated by a restless and malignant demon, which can find no aliment but in disturbing the peace and happiness of the nations, in embroiling every province of every empire, and in short, in producing one universal scene of confusion, of outrage and despair.

Not restrained by any sentiments of moderation, *the five men* burn with an insatiable zeal to destroy every fabric of civil polity, and particularly the glorious, the well-cemented, but in parts impaired fabric of the British constitution, and to make the universe bend its neck to the yoke of their domineering ambition. Not re-

frained by any sentiments of religious reverence, or any awe of divine punishment they are restlessly busy in eradicating every antient notion of morality and of justice, in dissolving every bond of religious union which ties the mind to habits of piety and of benevolence,—in short in *uncivilizing* mankind, and in reducing them, once more, to the disorder, the ignorance and the barbarism of a state of nature.

This is no overcharged picture of the foul designs of the Directorial Despots, who in the space of a few years, nay of a few months, have shed more blood, have spent more treasure, have violated more obligations of humanity and of justice, than the old Depotism of Versailles did, in the course of ages, from the time of the first Capet, to the mild reign of Louis the XVI.

How thankful then ought we to be, that this despotism is not suffered to pace with strides of ruin through this island! How ought we to rejoice that its insolence is humbled, its usurping ambition crest-fallen, and that the destruction of

its fleet at the mouths of the Nile, and the disasters of its army in Egypt have shaken the stability of its power, and have excited throughout Europe a sense of the necessity of humbling a tyranny that would have crushed all Europe, if that God whose ways though mysterious are always just, had not dashed in a moment into the air the projects of its proud ambition; and in no very obscure characters, marked the catastrophe of its crimes and the departure of its colossal greatness!

How thankful ought we to be to that good God who has blessed the valour of our seamen with success, and delivered the world from the gripe of that sanguinary monster whose friendship to Switzerland and to Italy was treachery and death!

The political greatness of Britain has risen to a height of consequence, a vantage-ground of power above the European nations, unknown to her ancestors; and even her internal prosperity, much as it has suffered by the calamities of war,

yet contrasted with the internal misery, embarrassments and dissensions of most other countries, was never greater than at this moment. And let us trust that this prosperity arising from the virtue, the humanity, the energy of action and the sense of justice that pervades our countrymen, as much as from their physical valour or their military skill, contains in itself, the principle of a long continuance. Indeed it cannot soon pass away from this island; since the capital of our great rival in national glory, France, has vanished before the confiscations of the government; and since the destruction, which her marine has sustained in this war, cannot, according to the ordinary calculation of human exertions, or of the resources of France, be repaired in less than half a century.

The enemy, which Britain has most to dread is her debt and her taxes; but we seem placed in a situation, in which we may sustain the weight of our present burthens, if the industry of posterity be not mortgaged to a larger amount; or,

if any means can be devised to take the pressure off the funds ; and to raise the supplies, that are wanted for the present emergency, by wiser and better concerted schemes of financial wisdom.

Of the commerce of the world it is supposed, that three fourths centre, at present, in these realms ; and this vast portion of universal trade, which cannot readily be diverted into other channels, must keep our resources, if they be but managed with honest frugality, from that gulf of bankruptcy, into which France has been so long plunged ; and from which, by endeavouring to escape by fraud, rapine and injustice, instead of industry, justice and œconomy, she has only involved herself still deeper in the same abyss of ruin ; from which, the mind of every wise statesman, and every honest man will for ever recoil with unspeakable aversion.

I cannot help remarking, how grateful we ought to be to providence ! not merely for the successes of our arms, but for the abundance of [of our last harvest, and the present reduction in

the price of provisions. — Here is ample cause of rejoicing for us all; and particularly for our poor brethren; who are, as much as is possible, spared from the new burthens, which the necessities of war require; and who, perhaps, all things fairly considered, have not been, for several years, in a state of greater affluence, ease and comfort than they are at this moment.* — Far different is it with the poor in France! — where there is more oppression and less wealth, where trade is dead, and industry meets with no encouragement; — but where the wretched peasant is dragged, by the iron arm of *requisition*, from his cottage and his home, the endearments of his family, and the sight of his native fields, to gratify the ambitious views of the miscreants at the helm; to shed the blood of those who never offended him, and whom he never

* The condition of the poor, in this country, though by no means so comfortable as it might be, is yet, I am inclined to believe, in a state of slow but gradual amelioration. The attention of enlightened and benevolent men, to the subject of the poor-laws, and to the best means of providing for the poor, has diminished a part of this mass of misery, and has shewn how it may be still more diminished.

offended; to forsake, with his home, his sense of justice and humanity; and to subsist by plunder, assassination, and every atrocity.—Far different would it have been with the poor here! —if the French could have made good their menaces; and poured the torrent of the battle into this smiling country. Then the peace, which gladdens our cottages—the gaiety which is seen in our villages—the tranquillity, the security of person and property, which we now enjoy, notwithstanding our national embarrassments and our individual difficulties, would all have fled before the havoc of the enemy.—Then our fields would have been strewed with death, and every path tracked with the blood-shed of rapine and despair.—No man's life would have been secure, no man's property safe. All confidence would have vanished between man and man; the dear ties of blood, kindred and friendship would have been severed, and nothing would have been seen but the haggard features of misery and distraction.—Then our commerce would

have vanished ; the loom and the plough would have stood still ; and subsistence, if any could have subsisted, could only have been had by mutual robbery and destruction.

Such would have been no exaggerated detail of our calamities, if the French had made good their landing, and been victorious in the battle ; —and not happier would have been our case, if, instead of the furious havoc of the French legions, any civil commotions had taken place among us, and our country had been involved in a revolutionary tempest—then we should have been oppressed by needy and rapacious demagogues ;—then every sort of outrage would have been committed here, that since the year 1791 has darkened the annals of humanity in France ; and, instead of acquiring freedom, the poor would have been involved in a ten-fold slavery. They would, probably, have been cheated as the peasantry of France have, alas ! but too long been cheated, by the delusive names of equality and liberty ; while they would

have been made the victims of the most outrageous inequality and oppression. There is no government which is so sanguinary as democracy; and, all things considered, there is none under which oppression is so widely extended, or so little controuled.

Instead of one King, governing by the laws, and restrained within limits of moderation, by their restrictions, the people of this country would have had several hundred tyrants, to waste their happiness and to spill their blood.—This would have been the case, if the English monarchy had been exchanged for a French democracy—for what is falsely called *liberty and equality*; but what, in truth, deserves the name of the most execrable tyranny and injustice.

How thankful then ought we to be to that good and wise Disposer of all events, who has saved us by the merciful, guardian hand which he has extended over the safety and peace of these realms, from these disastrous scenes of ruin, convulsion and despair!!!

Ought not what we do know of the nature of French tyranny, to induce us, more tenderly, to cherish the lovely form of British freedom, and to be unwilling to forego it, for any mongrel-system of servitude and oppression, which the French thirst to import, or any visionary or incendiary spirits of our own would willingly introduce among us? Does not the experience of its practical usefulness prompt us to revere the British constitution? Ought we not to regard the spirit of its wisely-tempered liberty with the spirit of enthusiasm; and to pray that it may descend with the authority, but without the feebleness of age, to our remotest posterity?

To deny that there are any corruptions in our government, would be the height of folly; there are certainly many such corruptions; but of these, though there are some which might safely be removed, there are others, which, tho' abstractedly evil, are yet practically inseparable from the frail cement of all human institutions; which will necessarily be mingled with the vices

and infirmities of those, by whom they are administered, and for whom they are designed; but, whatever may be its defects, who would not prefer the British constitution, with all its imperfections, to a democracy, with all its boasted but illusive advantages?

The extent of patronage, possessed by the British Sovereign, has often been a topic of crimination and complaint; but it must be confessed, that no government can subsist without, at least, some portion of such influence.—A certain degree of patronage, is as necessary to a democracy as a monarchy. The only difference is, that in the first, it is more usually bestowed by a mob, in the last, by an individual; in the first by election, in the last by appointment. In a monarchy, the candidate for power, has only to caress one, or, at most, a few individuals; in a democracy, he has to bend the knee to thousands, and to practice a variety of unworthy arts, to win the suffrage of the populace; who are ever liable to strange fluctuations of capri-

cioufness, and to the agitation of a contrariety of passions.

Patronage, in whatever body it may be vested must excite competitors and consequently factions. For, in this case, interested hope, frequently disappointed, at last inflames into the virulence of discontent. The primary cause of the spirit of faction in all governments is a vehement desire to supplant the party in power in their stations of honour and emolument.—I will not say that more virtuous and patriotic motives do not often, I trust, that they do often animate the energies of faction, and of the leaders of political hostilities; but they certainly operate less seldom and less forcibly than the envy of rivalry, and the lust of dominion.

While men remain fixed at their present temperature of morals, alternately fluctuating between passion and reason, between vice and virtue, there will be faction, or invidious and furious competitions for distinction, for place and power in all governments; and democracies are

certainly more exposed to their baneful influence than monarchies. In the former, the transient possession of places of trust and power and their elective distribution by the people, sets fire to a spirit of turbulent intrigue, and feeds it with perpetual fuel. Hence the contentions of jealousy and envy, and the vehement conflicts of ambition are more tempestuous and destructive in a republic than a monarchy.

In monarchy there is a certain limit, at which ambitious expectation ends; in democracy there is no quiescence to the Demon of aspiring pride till it reaches the pinnacle of tyranny.—In monarchy there is a wish to be high; in democracy to be highest; in the one, individuals are emulous to the great, in the other, to the greatest.—In monarchy the highest station of power is no object of envy; in democracy envy is busy even with the lowest.—The factions, that agitate a democracy, resemble the eruptions of a volcano, that spread devastation and ruin through the space which they occupy; in a mo-

marchy they are more like the mists, that collect and fret away their harmless rage round the summit of the mountains.

Whatever defects may adhere to monarchy, there are none, which do not, in a still greater degree, belong to democracy. If in monarchy there be a principle which tends to generate the growth of intrigue, the prostitution of talents and the corruption of virtue, it will be found that there is in democracy a similar principle, but which is of a more rapid growth, and is associated with more mischievous effects. If, in the present state of human nature we should attempt to rear a fabric of Democracy on the ruins of our antient constitution, we should certainly expose ourselves to a long interval of revolutionary storms, and of civil bloodshed; and after all for what?—for a phantom of perfection, which we may admire in the visions of romance, but which was never yet embodied in any shape of practical government; and thus, in grasping at an illusory shadow, we should

inevitably forfeit every particle of our present freedom with all the advantage of our wide-spread commerce and our variegated industry.

But let it not be supposed that, because, from long and mature reflection, I am the strenuous opponent of democracy, I am therefore a base and dastardly advocate for political servitude and the divine right of princes. No, my friends and countrymen, — far otherwise. There is no truth which appears more plain and indisputable to my mind than this; that all government is a power in trust; and that the only valid title deed of its right is the will of the people.

The sole end and object of government is or ought to be, to afford security of life and of property to those who live under it; and by every possible mode which wisdom can devise, to favour the interests of virtue and the production of happiness. That government which answers these purposes and promotes these ends though only in a definite degree, does notwith-

standing some partial acts of folly or oppression, deserve the cheerful and willing support of those who live under it.

A people who are themselves tainted with corruption, and covered with infirmities, must not look for abstract purity in those who rule over them. Vainly to presume so to adjust the intricate mechanism of power, as to preclude all interruptions from passion and all obstructions from vice, is to forget that we are men.

In the complicated system of national policy, which embraces and has to unite so many divided and discordant interests, it is madness to expect metaphysical perfection. But in those cases, in which the product of the whole political system taken together, is, notwithstanding a variety of particular evils, on the side of happiness, we have reason to be satisfied. To conspire to subvert such a system, is to be a traitor to the public happiness, and the parricide of one's country.

Resistance to established institutions, is by no means justifiable, till their sum of misery, in a great and incalculable degree, exceeds their sum of happiness. Where a vast, unbounded and accumulated oppression is exercised on the subject; where the happiness of a whole people is, as it was in the *worst period* of old, and as it has been in the *best period* of New France, sacrificed to the interest of a few; there the old arguments of prudence are forgotten in the ^{more} cogent ^{impulses} ~~ones~~ of self preservation; and resistance becomes rather an act of necessity than of choice.

Reason, as well as feeling, teach every man that protection and obedience are reciprocal obligations; but where the first is withheld, the last, if it be continued, no longer flows from affection, but from fear. But where a nation, like that of Great Britain, has long flourished under a particular system, and under it enjoyed a great relative share of prosperity and of happiness,—a system which protects the rights and property of the subject, while it restrains the

arbitrary will of the sovereign, — such a system, certainly, deserves to be cherished with affection, and to be defended with intrepidity, and not to be tamely abandoned to the frenzy of innovation, in order to make way for a chimerical democracy, which promises nothing but outrage and misery.

In government, as in philosophy, more attention is certainly due to the deductions of experiment than the gay illusions of hypothesis. In the modification of political power, we ought not rashly to hazard changes, which only glitter with ideal advantages, and teem with real miseries.

However pure the rules and maxims of civil institutions may be in their origin, they will, occasionally, be perverted and abused. As the stream, however clear and limpid in its source, will be tinged by the banks along which it flows, and show the impurity of its channel in the colour of its waters; so the best laws and the purest political regulations will be debased by

those who administer their influence, and superintend their agency.

The measures of conduct, which individuals prescribe to themselves, are often planned in wisdom, and executed in folly. It is much the same in government. Its theory may be beautiful and just; but the practical operation is seldom answerable to it; because man is more ruled by his passions than his reason; and the governors of nations are not exempted from the infirmities of humanity.

But while I am an apologist for the venal lapses of political infirmity, I am by no means willing to defend those abuses in the state, which are the rank growth of hardened iniquity, or that gross venality in statesmen, at which honesty turns pale.—Living in a sequestered and humble station, and feeling no corrupt bias of fondness either towards the minister or his illustrious antagonist; and not more dazzled by the meridian glory of the one, than sympathising with the neglected greatness of the other; I will not

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shrink from being the advocate of any reform which has virtue for its principle, and happiness for its end.

That reform, which, at present, seems most the object of the popular wish, is a reform in the representation of the people. It must be allowed, that such a reform, if planned with wisdom, and conducted with firmness and moderation, might be of essential service to the country ; and which, while it strengthened the true dignity of the crown, might consolidate the interests of the people. It might, if I may so express myself, rejuvenate the constitution. It might infuse into the body politic new life and vigour.

But the utility of such a reform, depends on its adequacy to obviate the evil which it is intended to counteract. The evil, complained of, is parliamentary corruption. To remove this evil, two things are necessary ;—to prevent bribery at elections and in the senate. The former is the usual preliminary to the latter. No man will purchase parliamentary honours for more

than they are worth. It may, therefore, justly be presumed, that he, who gives a high price for *not always* the votes of others, only does it, that he may, afterwards, get a higher price for his own. The money spent at elections thus becomes a mere speculation in trade.

But it must be acknowledged that the representative could not buy votes, if the constituent were not disposed to sell them. To effect one step therefore towards the removal of parliamentary corruption, it seems necessary rather to abridge than to extend the elective franchise. To render universal the right of voting, — to give a vote to every needy mendicant, and to every menial and lacquered dependant, would only be to make corruption more general and elections more turbulent. None should be allowed to exercise the elective franchise, who have not such a share of property, as, if not always connected with, is, at least, competent and favourable to independence of mind.

The plan of universal suffrage proposed by

the Duke of Richmond appears either the abortion of madness or of folly. The plan brought forward by the able and the virtuous Mr. Grey though less romantic, does not sufficiently circumscribe the right of voting nor the qualifications of the candidate. Of all the plans of parliamentary reform, which I have seen, that brought forward by Mr. Pitt, when his bosom was animated with that flame of liberty, which had warmed the heart of his father, appears to me the safest, the most practical and liable to the fewest exceptions.

Every

But still I must confess that every plan of parliamentary reform which ever was, or can be proposed must be nugatory and inefficient, unless particular care be taken, to prevent by provisions and restrictions which cannot be evaded, needy and rapacious men from perching like Harpies, on the seats of the house of commons.

Of that vast mass of public misery which every humane man must lament in a neigh-

bouring, I wish that I could say, in the christian sense of the word,—a neighbour-country, the greatest part originated from admitting a horde of indigent and speculative adventurers into the constituent, legislative and conventional assemblies,—a swarm of unprincipled attornies, money-scriveners advocates, counting-house clerks, &c. &c.—men who, having nothing to lose themselves, bent their whole attention to projects of rapine and devastation;—men whose financial ability consisted in swelling the lists of confiscation and proscription, and in the most fraudulent and atrocious schemes of national peculation. Thus they soon shook all public and private confidence to the centre; they withered the vital energies of enterprising industry; which perish the moment, that, the sacred and inalienable right of the individuality of property ceases to be respected; and government instead of being the æconomical guardian and the incorruptible protector, becomes the lavish spendthrift and the unfeeling plunderer of the peoples property.

Moral principle is certainly neither necessarily excluded from the chillness of penury or the luxury of wealth; perhaps both states,—(the first by increasing the power of temptation, the last by multiplying the number of temptations) are almost equally ungenial to its growth. Competence seems the soil most favourable to virtue; and certainly, we can hardly hope to find, in those who have no property themselves, a scrupulous regard for the rights of property in others; or for the sacred principles of justice, which are the basis of those rights. It is by no means safe nor politic for individuals to entrust the guardianship of their property to those who are entirely without property; much less is it safe or politic for a nation to commit to *adventurous mendicants and paupers* the keys of the national treasure, which offers so many temptations to indigence and so many incitements to rapacity.

It seems essential to the public interest, ~~that~~ no persons should sit in the house of com-

mons, who cannot give a pledge of their independence in the possession of a *certain definite and competent portion, nor of fictitious or involved, but of solid, real and unencumbered fortune.* By thus removing one of the strongest inducements to corruption, we, in a great measure, invalidate the potency of temptation, and break the spell of the tempter. Parliamentary integrity is by no means, to be looked for in any member, who is not, in his private circumstances, placed so high in the scale of competence, as to be above the lure of bribery and the necessity of fawning upon the insolence of power for the earnings of obsequious depravity.

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To suffer that qualification of property, which is requisite to the free exercise of senatorial independence, to degenerate into a mere ideal and nominal possession, is to suffer needy adventurers, panting for the wages of iniquity, to step over the threshold of that assembly, which can open at pleasure the sluices of the blood and treasure of Englishmen. It is in fact

to offer a premium on the introduction of persons, ~~who are~~ *already predisposed to corruption,* into those walls, which ought for ever to be the sanctuary of integrity.

I am indeed persuaded, so frail is man, that no legislative provisions, however wisely framed, or faithfully enforced, can entirely bar the avenues to corruption; * but he is certainly less exposed to the temptations of bribery who has an

* A laxity of private is that which causes a want of public principle. Public and private virtue are in fact only branches which issue from the same trunk. There, perhaps, never was a more dangerous or false notion propagated than this,—that a man's private has no relation to his public character, or that worthlessness in domestic was no obstacle to purity in civil life. According to this mode of reasoning an unprincipled gamester might be a good lord of the treasury, or the keeper of a bagnio pure enough for a chief justice. This pestilent doctrine was the invention of men destitute of principle; and who wished to repair their ruined fortunes from the spoils of the commonwealth,—men who conscious of the notoriety of their vices were anxious to make the people believe, that those very vices were auspicious, or, at least, not inauspicious to their public integrity.—But is a man grossly immoral in all the relations of private life,—a bad husband, a bad father,—a treacherous friend, an adulterer, a gamester,—a man whose criminal extravagance and whose guilty pleasures are the themes of public reproach,—is such a man worthy the public confidence? Is he fit to be placed in any station, in which, great temptation is to be resisted, and an inflexible integrity to be exercised? He who has but a spark of virtue will answer; no.—

unembarrassed income, than he, who having no property at all, or who, owing more than he possesses, is reduced to the alternative of either selling his conscience and his country, or of starving on the barren contemplation of his virtue. There are many chances in favour of the first acting on principles of independance; every chance is against the last acting on such principles.

If property be not a mark of wisdom, it is, at least, an indication of independence, and so far a criterion of honesty; * and ought, therefore, to be made an indispensable requisite to the exer-

* In this pamphlet I have confined myself to narrow limits, or I should willingly consider this subject more in detail; in order to illustrate the influence of property on the moral principle; to shew how far virtue depends on a certain share of physical happiness, and consequently how far the morality of the people may be amended, by the improvement of their circumstances. I know not a more interesting subject of inquiry than this is. Philosophers have never explained the true relations between physical want, and the want of moral principle. May we not diminish those crimes and vices, which are most common among the poor, in proportion, as we can excite in them a spirit of independance, the fruitful parent of industry and of virtue;—the antidote to corruption and the preservative of moral principle? Friendly societies, perhaps, encourage a spirit of independance among the poor, more than any political regulations could do. The founder of those societies deserves to

eise of the elective franchise and the qualification of a senator.

Such a reform as that which I have hinted would, I am persuaded, not be satisfactory to the extravagant wishes of visionary politicians and romantic innovators. But to attempt to quench *their* inordinate lust of change, would, be time mispent; we might as well strive to glut the rapacity of the ocean.

Considering man, abstractedly from any of those accidental distinctions and immunities, which a state of political union, from the combined operation of physical and moral causes always sooner or later produces—it may be metaphysically right, that every individual, infants and maniacs excepted, should have a voice in the election of the national representative; but we must remember, that government is instituted for the protection of property, as much or more

be ranked among the most illustrious benefactors of his country; and the richest noble in the land ought to think it an honour, as much as it is a duty, to belong to one of them.

than that of life (for whether in a state of nature or of society, the life of an individual is seldom endangered but from the desire of possessing the property attached to it, and which makes life worth attacking and prompts to the attack); and that, therefore, no person can fairly claim the privilege of being invested with that small share of political power, which gives a vote for the popular representative, who has not, at least, a certain degree of property which places him above a state of humiliation, beggary, and dependance.

To give votes to persons not possessing property is, in fact, only to *give so many more votes to persons who are possessed of a large share of it*; as it affords the latter an opportunity of engrossing a greater quantity of political power than of right belongs to them; and which they are likely to turn to mercenary or ambitious purposes. Thus, therefore, to deprive the indigent and the dependant part of the community of any share of political power, is rather favour-

able than adverse to that due equilibrium of power which ought to exist among the individuals of the same nation. It rather tends to repress than encourage political inequality; for to give political power to persons who, from the state of dependance in which they are placed, *have no will of their own*, is, in fact, only to confer an undue degree of influence on other individuals, of over-grown fortunes, *to whom their wills are obsequious*. We thus are only entrusting a power to the first *for the state, which they dispose of, to the last, to exercise against it*. I therefore conclude, that, in the grand and much agitated question of parliamentary reform, we ought to confer on property *so much and no more influence*, than favours the maintenance of independance, and prevents integrity from being exposed to sale.

If a certain quantum of property were universally throughout the kingdom, and both in the towns and counties to be made the indispensable qualification for the right of suffrage, the

only difficulty would consist in ascertaining how much, or in fixing on such a sum, as should tend most effectually to *blunt the edge of corruption.* *

In reply to what I have said, I know that it will be strenuously objected, that no portion of property however competent to, is either a *certain test of, or a security for integrity and independence.* This I will grant; but, at the same time I must say, that, in the present circumstances of the world, it seems the best test and security which we can obtain, and which is *less likely to deceive us, than any other test or security which can be devised.*—In calculations on human conduct it is impossible to arrive at certainty; for man is a Proteus often changing with a breath of air; and in attempting to determine before hand his course of action, probability is all we can

* On the *definite quantities* of property which it might be most for the public interest to assign as qualifications for the right of election, or of representation, the writer of these pages is silent, not merely on account of the intricacy of the subject; but because he only wishes humbly to suggest what he deems a practical and useful *principle of reform*; and, by no means, to detail a specific plan of reformation.

attain to. But I believe that there is no man in his senses, who will not acknowledge that it is far more probable that those constituents and representatives will be invincible to bribery, who possess a certain portion of independant property, than those who having no property at all, usually melt into depravity at the first glance of a temptation. It is vain to look for those high notions of independance which give energy to virtue and to patriotism in men immersed in distress and want. * In any reform which shall de-

* It was indeed the opinion of Sir Robert Walpole, and which seems to have descended to the ministers who have succeeded him, *that every man has his price*. I cannot subscribe to this notion; and, I firmly believe that there is in several men, both of the upper and lower house of parliament, a strength of moral principle which all the accumulated lures of ministerial corruption could not invalidate. And I moreover believe that there are few persons possessed only of those common means of subsistence which the imperious necessity of physical want requires, who would be base enough to truckle their conscience for emolument, if the sacred principles of truth and honesty founded on the christian sanctions, were impressed into their hearts with that care which their importance deserves, at that early period when conscience *shows its first germe*. Man is what early habit, *which is the true practical education*, makes him; but so long as education shall consist, rather in communicating to both sexes, vain and tinsel embellishments, *the froth of wisdom and the frippery of deceit*, than sound Christian principles and habits, so long will there be wanting in the public mind a vigorous principle of virtue to counteract the sollicitations of vice.

prive some species of property * of their undue preponderance and shall give to the whole property of the kingdom a more equal and general weight in the choice of the representative, every lover of his country would I trust, acquiesce; but however partial or unjust the present representation of the people may be, I firmly believe that it produces more happiness and less injustice, than would accrue from the adoption of the principle of universal suffrage;—a measure that would pour into parliament a flood of turbulent and mendicant adventurers, as eager to subvert the government as to ravage the subject. Of those patriotic wishes, which will ever be nearest the hearts of those Englishmen, who can discriminate between good and evil, this will certainly be one,—that their country may never be expos-

* I mean the property of rotten boroughs, which ought to be abolished, allowing the proprietors a fair remuneration. When ever the question of reform is agitated we ought never, for a moment, to lose sight of this maxim, that we ought not to violate justice when we get rid of iniquity. I heartily wish for the happiness of the Nobles and Clergy of France, and of other sufferers in the wreck of that country, that the French reformers had paid more attention to this invaluable maxim.

ed to the scourge of universal suffrage, — a scheme that is fraught with woe and ruin, and that, instead of the mild energies of well-adjusted power would introduce the uproar of a mob.

At this crisis, when the fair shrine of English freedom seems almost equally in danger from the opposing fury of discordant zealots, when anarchy threatens one way, and despotism another, and when it is to be feared *left their extremes should meet*, a reform in the representation, on a principle mild and equitable, easy in its application, and powerful in its efficacy, seems the best method of saving the constitution from the poison of corruption and from the ravages of despair. Between the wild surge of innovation, and a blind fondness for the shoals of ruinous abuse, it appears *that* temperate, middle course, in which there is the best chance of conducting the vessel of the state in safety through the tempest that affails her.

It has often been asked, with the insolence of triumph, as if the question involved a palpa-

ble absurdity. "Is this a fit time for reform?" Without being disposed, *at all adventures*, to answer this question in the negative, as those usually are who ask it; I am rather inclined to say that if there be any dangerous disease in the state to which, *on mature deliberation*, parliamentary reform is deemed an adequate remedy, that the sooner it takes place, the more likely it is to prove beneficial. Let us not delay the cure till *the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint*," till the wound which might be soothed and closed by lenient applications is gangrened, and no alternative is left but death or the sword!

To pretend that any measure is necessary to the salvation of the country, and yet, with blind indifference, to temporise with its importance,—to shift it off from day to day, is to mingle cowardice and folly. There are many who assume the merit of being votaries of reform, who yet, with the apathy of Felix, about a matter of the highest concern, wish to postpone it to "*a more convenient season*;" and

which they will never be brought to confess to have arrived, till the storm sets in, fierce and dreadful around them; and when palliatives, even if they are tried, will be tried in vain. There is no truth more certain than this, that the downfall of states is always accelerated by the timid and imbecil procrastination of preventive remedies.

Among the numerous advantages, that are likely to result from the principle of reform, opportunely applied, and exerted with moderation, are the following.—Great Britain would abstain from all wars of aggression; and, in wars of necessary defence, she would seldom have occasion to engage; for, not exhausting her strength in offensive operations, or in vain schemes of distant aggrandizement, she would possess an accumulated energy and vigor for defensive war, that would appal the aggressor. The disputes, that are liable to arise between nations, would not often explode in violence, if only one of them were animated with the spirit

of gentleness, instead of the spirit of strife, prevailing in them all.—The sincere and unfeigned love of peace, being infused into her councils, and extinguishing the spirit of ambition and the pride of conquest, this country, instead of affording fuel, to keep alive the flames of discord among the nations, would only lend her authority to repress them; and she would thus be regarded, with universal veneration, as the moderator of the dissensions of mankind. Holding out the sceptre of justice and the olive branch of peace, she might calm the turbulence and frenzy of the world.—It must likewise be remembered, that the spirit of conciliation and mildness, thus manifested and thus cherished by Great Britain, would soon spread by sympathy among her neighbours; for, *to the benevolent principle, Providence has wisely imparted a power of universal attraction, in order, one day, to make it universal.*

No system of reform could, indeed, in the present exigencies of the country, much diminish the pressure of public taxation; and it certainly

could not, without the most heinous injustice, annul a single shilling of that national debt, which has descended to us from the indiscretion of our ancestors, or has been accumulated by that of our contemporaries. For the payment of that debt, the credit of the whole kingdom is engaged; and the public faith ought never to be violated.

But would not reform cheer us with this consolatory reflection?—That it would deprive any minister of the power, of pushing to its utmost verge the maxim of Sir Robert Walpole, and of squandering the national resources, with criminal profusion, in order to generate *a swarm of base, and at the best, faithless adherents*,—those maggots that crawl out of corruption, and multiply as the state decays.—The popular representatives, having not only collectively, but individually an interest in their country's welfare; and ~~an~~ interest, not accruing indirectly from place, or pension, * or secret and mysterious largesses,

* It is well remarked by the committee of the H. C. on the public expenditure, that sinecure places are only pensions, with an ostensible

but directly from real and independant property —either the honest accumulation of their own industry or the bequest of their ancestors, would be frugal, vigilant and jealous œconomists of the public money. They would not liquidate the debt of the nation by drops, while they increased it by oceans. They would not adopt such a preposterous system of œconomy as should cause the finances of the country, for one retrograde

office annexed to them. As therefore their tenure does not require *present*, they ought to be kept as a reward for *past exertion*. They might very wisely be reserved, as the committee seem to think, for men who have fought the battles, or grown old and feeble in the service of their country. Public services ought to be rewarded; nor ought the reward to be dispensed with the scantiness of parsimony, but the copiousness of magnificence;—suited to the generosity of a great nation, and the glory of great achievements.—I cannot here refrain from remarking the great disparity between monarchical and republican governments, in the principle of gratitude. In republics, the rulers, fearful of exciting a rival, have not the *courage to be grateful*; in monarchies, gratitude is a sensation lively, vigorous and unmingled with jealousy.—While, in this war, the heroes, who have bled and triumphed in the cause of England, have been honoured and rewarded; the most illustrious statesmen and warriors of the French, have been loaded with ignominy and misfortunes, and either sent to suffer death upon the scaffold, or to languish out life, in an unwholesome region of South America.—Even Buonaparte, to whom France owes accumulated victories, seems to have been decoyed into his Egyptian bondage, by the *suspicious cowardice of the five tyrants*.

step to safety, to make a thousand progressive strides to bankruptcy and destruction.

But from these gay visions of happiness, which may never be realised, let us return, to contemplate our actual situation; which tells us that we are involved in a war, immense in its expenses, great in its disasters, but glorious in its triumphs. The enemy, with whom we have to contend, is obstinate beyond example, vindictive beyond moderation, ambitious beyond restraint, and fired with a spirit of aggrandisement which, hitherto, has neither been satiated by success, nor corrected by misfortune.

Yet, furious and implacable as is the foe, against whom we are engaged, who is there among us, so sanguinary, as not to think that enough blood has already been shed, in this calamitous contest? Who is there, with so little sympathy for the sufferings of humanity, as not to imagine it full time for the sword to be returned into the scabbard? Who is there, so unconscious of his country's interest, as not to know that the much

longer protraction of hostilities, is likely, from the mere accumulation of expence, to involve us in ruin and despair ?

Before than the sword of continental war, be again unsheathed, might not this country, without any imputation of baseness or dishonour try by a magnanimous offer of peace, to a bitter but vanquished enemy, to stop the further, prodigal effusion of the blood and the treasure of mankind? But if the rulers of the French, fired even to madness with schemes of a ruinous ambition, shall refuse to listen to the voice of justice and of humanity, which loudly calls upon them to restore tranquillity to the nations,—if in contempt of the interest of that people, over which they tyrannise, and of every kingdom, which is either trembling on the brink or absorbed in the vortex of the war, they will persevere in their artfully concerted projects of universal devastation, what remains for us, but manfully to stand up in the contest and trust the issue to immortal wisdom? As christians, as men animated with

the holy flame of benevolence and anxious to diminish the sum of human wretchedness, we ought certainly to omit no favourable opportunity of pacification, but we ought, at the same time, though without a single particle of malignity, boldly to vindicate the safety of our king *

* The author deems the kingly power essentially requisite to the prosperity and the safety of the country ; and he supposes, that, without it, we should be tossed on the same sea of troubles, on which the vessel of the state in France has, now, for so many years been driven to and fro—abandoned to the madness of ambitious demagogues, and exposed to the most destructive storms.

As in the planetary bodies, so, in bodies politic, there seems to be a principle of repulsion and of gravitation. The principle of political repulsion, consists in the private interests of each particular member, which have a tendency to fly off from the collective or central interest ; and the counteracting principle, or that of political gravitation, is the energy of the government ; which either always does, or always ought to press all the particular interests of the state into unity ; and cause the whole to incline to one common centre, in which the true political interest or the public welfare resides. For this purpose, a strong coercive power must be lodged in some one part of the state, in order to act as a concentrating force upon every part of the whole ; and, it appears to me, that there is no expedient, which human wisdom can devise, so fit for this purpose, as that of the kingly office.

By this means, the wills of the separate parts of the community are condensed, like scattered rays, into one focus ; unity and identity is given to the body politic ; and, in one palpable and stationary representative, both public and private interest are made to approximate, in the nearest possible degree.

The vices, the follies, the imbecility or incapacity of a king, though they expose him to reproach, and sully the dignity of his private and

and country, our religion, our liberties and our laws.

public character, by no means, invalidate the uses of his office. For, where a king, either from defect of virtue or of genius, is not personally productive of good, he, at least, may always be considered as officially preventive of evil.—The worth of kingly power, like the worth of most things in this world, must not be estimated more by its direct, than its indirect and comparative advantages; nor more by the blessings it produces, than the miseries it averts.—Thus, in those governments, in which the *personal will and caprice* of the sovereign is limited by the restrictions of the laws, and is moderated by the controul of a free and pure representative, the kingly office is highly beneficial to the state, notwithstanding the private defects of the person in possession of it.

There is an old and vulgar, but significant saying—“Put a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to the devil!” This seldom fails to be true of republican chiefs; who being commonly thrown up, in the turbulent agitations of the state, from low and obscure stations to the summit of power, are intoxicated with its possession, and furious and extravagant in its exercise.—The arrogance of mushroom upstarts, who, in a moment, emerge from dependance to command, from beggary to splendor, is so notorious, as to have become proverbial.

The representative and transient sovereign of a republic is always more insolent and, as far as he can be, more despotic in the use of power, than an hereditary King.—The King wears his honours with grace and ease; and is often as courteous as if he did not possess them. Knowing that his office is fixed and permanent, and long accustomed to the magnificence of sovereignty and to the sensations of pre-eminence, he usually enjoys his splendor without pride and his power with moderation.—On the contrary, the republican sovereign cannot easily accommodate his habits to his dignity, or his dignity to his habits. His honours sit awkwardly upon him; he is embarrassed with the sensations of their novelty; and he feels a sense of pre-eminence, which swells into pride, instead of softening into complacency. Suddenly lifted into a station of power, he is impatient to gratify his passion for its exercise; past hunger

And we ought to remember that this is no common contest;—but one, in which the dear-

increases his present appetite; and the violence of his rapacity is increased by the shortness of possession.

The writer of this, though a zealous advocate for a limited hereditary monarch, in preference to the fluctuating and changeling despots of republican caprice; would by no means wish to abridge any portion of that liberty, which man is capable of enjoying. When the Bastille fell the author, in the energy of youthful transport, exulted in the crash;—as a sound which promised to appal the oppressor and to cheer the slave. He moreover rejoiced when Louis XVI. was deprived of the invidious possession of despotic power; a power which he never coveted and seldom abused. But what friend to mankind, who has observed the series of calamities which, since the establishment of the republic, have befallen France, and the torrent of aspiring factions; that have successively ravaged the country and waded to power through each other's blood, who, I say, that contemplates this sad and eventful history, can help lamenting that, France misled by the sophisticated cant of philosophic adventurers, who had never analysed the human character, should have abjured royalty in search of happiness?

Unhappy Louis! thou wast deserving of a better fate! Thy benevolent affections, though often counteracted by the intrigues of thy queen or the baseness of thy court, always pointed thy views to thy people's happiness! The energies of thy mind were either not known or not observed during the parade of thy prosperity, but adversity excited their activity, and unveiled their splendor!—Stripped of the insignia of royalty, cast from the highest heights of power into the lowest depths of misery, thou didst not sink into a pusillanimous despair! Thou soughtst solace in thy captivity by teaching wisdom to thy son,—alas, the heir only to thy miseries!—Thou foundest a refuge from misfortune in the exercise of virtue; and despising an earthly crown thou didst fix thy eyes on the crown of glory!—Who can contemplate and not admire thy patient demeanor, thy uncomplaining gentleness in the midst of so many rude and wanton scoffs, so many cold neglects, so many bitter and unjust privations?

est interests of all nations are involved. It is a contest for the security of their property and their independance. It is a contest for the preservation of all those tender and endearing charities, which bind men together in families and in nations; and which soften the asperities of the social union where ever it exists.

If this nation and her allies will, in the continuance of this contest, steadily adhere to those principles of justice and humanity, which are not the transient growth of any age or country, but are universally binding on men of all ages and

Unhappy Louis! who with a heart disposed to sympathy, can read the detail, of thy imprisonment, when thy grandeur had passed away like the morning vision, without glowing with indignation against thy unfeeling and merciless persecutors? And, when indignation has subsided, who can help weeping, that men, who made so many loud pretensions to a benevolent philosophy, should, with more than Indian savageness, exercise the cruelty of invention, in order to sharpen the arrows of thy afflictions?

Spirit of Louis! who may not better learn to endure his own sufferings when he thinks of thine! Spirit of Louis! thine are sufferings which, ages hence, when their particulars are less fresh in the memory and Time has veiled them, in that interesting shade, which he throws over the features of past transactions, shall become the subjects of tragedy, to some future Shakespear, who shall dip his pen in the empyreal ether of the passions, and make nations mourn at the the recital of thy sorrows!!!

countries,—if, without any petty delusive schemes of *partitioning rapacity*, which rendered the first alliance against France, more like a conspiracy of robbers than an union of honest men, they will consent to suspend their mutual jealousies, and form a new confederacy for the preservation of their common and their separate independence, and for the integral rights of property against the promiscuous rapine of anarchy,—such a confederacy, firm and compact, not hobbling and disjointed like the former, would unite the wishes of the wise and the good throughout the world. It would even attach the affections and the support of every individual in that country, with which we are at war; except the horde of merciless plunderers, whose safety seems to consist in dissolving every tie that concentrates the happiness and harmonises the interests of individuals and of nations.

how moved?

The first confederacy against France, seems to have been weak and transitory; because it was instigated by a spirit of rapine, and founded on

the principles of injustice. For, it must be acknowledged, that France, as an independant state, had certainly a right to regulate her own internal œconomy, on any plan which she thought best; and foreign nations had no right to interfere in her domestic policy, however visionary or mischievous it might be.—But when France, not contented with the right of legislating for her own territory, sets herself up for a proud lawgiver to other nations, when she presumes to trample on the independance of other states, and imperiously to dictate forms of government to the Dutch, the Swiss and the Cisalpines, —when not satisfied with the profession of her own political creed, she exhibits the fiery impatience of Mahomet, to spread it through the earth by the havoc of the sword;—then it certainly becomes the duty, as much as it is the interest, of other nations to concentrate all their energy, to vindicate their insulted rights, and to humble a domineering tyranny, which, if suffered to extend its ravages, will not leave a vestige of na-

tional independance, in any region of the world. Such a league among the nations is demanded by policy ; it is approved by humanity ; it is founded in justice ; and the divine energy will cover it with triumphs. In such a confederacy, and on such principles, we ought, vigorously, to oppose the usurpations of the *five headed tyrant* ; and beat down the banners of rapine, which he is unfurling to the world.

In a crisis of peril, like the present, it behoves us to endure, with patience, even accumulated burthens, rather than crouch under the oppressions of the enemy ; it behoves us rather cheerfully to aid, than sullenly to counteract the measures of government :—in one word—it behoves us to unite, hand in hand, and heart in heart, for our common safety ; and to sacrifice the spirit of party upon the altar of our country.



